

Message Text

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ACTION LAB-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
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R 010416Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5865
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
USSINT BAGHDAD 191
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0516

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, XF
SUBJECT: GULF LABOR MINISTERS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 42932

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN PROMISED FULL TRANSCRIPT IN ARABIC OF GULF LABOR MINISTERS CONFERENCE ONCE TAPE HAS BEEN FULLY TRANSCRIBED IN ABOUT ONE WEEK. IN MEANTIME GOB DIRECTOR OF LABOR DESCRIBED MEETING AS ROUTINE FORUM FOR GENERAL SPEECHES TO PRESS AND PUBLIC. ALL RESOLUTIONS WERE RATHER STANDARD CALLS FOR COORDINATION ON LABOR LEGISLATION, WORKING TOWARD STANDARD POLICY ON WAGES AND SOCIAL INSURANCE, COORDINATION OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY STANDARDS, AND OPEN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GULF NATIONALS IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE REGION.

2. ILO WAS THE TOPIC OF SOME DISCUSSION BUT PRIMARILY ON THE FUNDING PROBLEM BROUGHT ABOUT BY U.S. WITHDRAWAL. IN FORMAL MEETINGS ILO DISCUSSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN TERMS
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OF FINANCES. IT IS AGREED THAT ARAB COUNTRIES WILL HAVE TO INCREASE CONTRIBUTIONS. SAUDI ARABIA INDICATED A DOUBLING OF ITS CONTRIBUTION BUT ANY FINAL DECISION WAS LEFT TO NEXT MEETING OF ARAB LABOR ORGANIZATION TO DETERMINE WHAT OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES ARE WILLING TO DO. IN SOME SPEECHES AND IN CORRIDORS HHQE WAS OFTEN EXPRESSED THAT U.S. WOULD SOON REJOIN ILO. GULF MINISTERS ARE AFRAID THAT ILO WILL

TAKE HARD-LINE, LEFTWARD SWING WITHOUT U.S. INFLUENCE. GOB
DIRECTOR OF LABOR SAID SAUDI MINISTER INTIMATED INTEL FROM
BRITISH SOURCES THAT U.S. NOW PLANNING EARLY RETURN TO ILO.
(EMBOFF SUSPECTS THIS COULD HAVE BEEN ATTEMPT TO DRAW
STATEMENT FROM HIM ON U.S. INTENTIONS.)

3. GOB LABOR DIRECTOR SAID THAT MOST OF COORIDOR DISCUSSIONS
WERE SAUDI AND UAE ATTEMPTS TO ASSURE THAT QATAR AND BAHRAIN
NOT PLANNING TO PERMIT REAL UNIONS AND THAT ALL COUNTRIES
NOT MOVE TOO FAST ON LABOR AND SOCIAL LEGISLATION (HENCE
RESOLUTION FOR COORDINATION IN THIS FIELD). IN OPINION
OF GOB LABOR DIRECTOR, THESE TWO "DESERTS" (SAUDI AND UAE)
WITHOUT ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION OTHER THAN "GOD'S OIL",
FEAR EVEN LABOR ASSOCIATION LIMITED IN POWER AND TO NATIONALS.
ACCORDING TO HIM THE INDIGENOUS LABORERS IN THESE TWO
COUNTRIES OCCUPY A LOWER STATUS IN THEIR GOVERNMENTS'
EYES THAN EXPAT WORKERS FROM THE SUBCOUNTINENT.
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